

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, March 13, 2015

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Action Item Calendar

Today (March 13): [Alternate-assessment](#) student files review

Tomorrow: PARCC student registrations due (see [below](#))

Monday (March 16): Update [PARCC Personal Needs](#) profiles

Monday (March 16): [Funding Formula](#) data due

March 27: [Textbook](#) list due

Notes from Commissioner Gist

- 1. Governor Raimondo's Budget: full funding for education aid; funds for early learning, school construction, dual enrollment**

On behalf of the schoolchildren of Rhode Island, I am grateful for and enthusiastic about Governor Raimondo's budget proposal. Governor Raimondo has said many times that the future prosperity of Rhode Island demands that we develop and maintain a great system of public education. Her Fiscal Year 2016 budget recognizes the many achievements of our school leaders, teachers, and students and provides the support we need to continue making progress – particularly by increasing aid to local school communities, by giving students greater access to

challenging coursework, and by expanding opportunities in the vital area of early learning.

Among the highlights in Governor Raimondo's budget for education are:

- funding of the fifth year of the Funding Formula for education aid to local school communities, at \$35.5-million increase;
- full support for our plan to bring the number of state-funded prekindergarten classrooms to 60 by 2019, with \$1 million in additional funding for 2016;
- \$1.4 million to bring full-day kindergarten to all Rhode Island communities (7 school districts at this time do not offer universal full-day kindergarten);
- an additional \$20 million to rebuild and modernize school facilities, with a School Building Authority established within RIDE and a projected \$80 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2017; and
- \$1.3 million to pick up all tuition fees for students in dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment, enough funds to increase participation by 50 percent.

We have developed a table on the education aid for each community under Governor Raimondo's Fiscal Year 2016 budget, which we have posted [here](#).

2. Design team seeks feedback on 2nd prototype of strategic plan for education

Five months ago, we announced a statewide survey on public education, which served as the first step in the process of

developing and writing our next strategic plan for education in Rhode Island. More than 10,000 Rhode Islanders participated in the survey, and the results have guided the team of volunteers that is developing and writing the strategic plan. I am grateful that the views and the voices of so many Rhode Islanders have played a central role in this on-going process.

Last month, the 26 members of the Ambassador Design Team released their first prototype for the plan, which consisted of a set of values statements. Through surveys and through community meetings, the team members sought and received feedback on this prototype. Based on this feedback, the team has released its second prototype, which includes revised value statements and a set of priorities that will serve as the organizing principles for the strategic plan.

Now, we are reaching out for your feedback on this second prototype. Your feedback will provide valuable information to the Ambassador Design Team members as they review and revise their prototype and work toward developing a third prototype to release this spring.

I would be very grateful if you would use this link to review the new prototype and provide the design team with your feedback:

www.ride.ri.gov/Plan-Feedback .

Please share this link with others on your team, in your network, and in your community.

We have also posted on our website a brief summary of the entire design process for developing and writing the strategic plan:

www.ride.ri.gov/Strategic-Plan.

With your help and engagement, I know that we are in the process developing an aspirational and ambitious strategic plan that will improve the lives of our students and their families for years to come.

3. R.I. PARCC assessments to begin Monday (March 16)

On Monday, we will begin our first administration of PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessments, and I am proud to say that Rhode Island is ready for PARCC! I truly appreciate the dedication and commitment from you and from everyone on your team, particularly your principals and test coordinators. I know that the transition to PARCC has provided all of us with many challenges – from the use of technology to questions about parental refusal to inquiries about the use of assessment results. We've worked through each issue that has come our way, and I am confident that the PARCC assessments will benefit our schools, our teachers, our students, and the families in your community.

The 2015 PARCC results will establish a baseline that we can use to measure growth and progress in the years to come. PARCC assessments will provide all of us with excellent, detailed information on how our students are doing. Teachers and parents will see where students may need extra support and where students may be ready to face additional challenges. Parents I've talked to are really interested in receiving this information.

When we receive results from this first round of assessments, we'll be able to compare Rhode Island with the other PARCC states, including some of the highest-performing states such as

Maryland and Massachusetts. Educators and community members will be able to compare local results with those from similar communities in any of the other PARCC states.

As you know, PARCC assessments are aligned with what students are learning in the classroom. These assessments will encourage students to apply their knowledge, to analyze, to think, and to write – much more than any assessments we have used before in Rhode Island.

Though we are beginning the administration of PARCC on Monday, most of the other PARCC states have already started the process, with Ohio leading the way in mid-February. The number of PARCC assessments successfully completed has already surpassed 3 million! Test administration has gone smoothly across the PARCC consortium. Among the few problems that have arisen, such as log-in issues, most are matters that you can resolve locally. This morning, we sent to your assessment coordinators a brief set of “quick tips” that can help you resolve most or all of the issues that might arise on the first day of testing.

The media have raised two questions this week that may need some clarification:

What happens to students who do not participate in PARCC assessments? Will they receive a score of “0”?

On our previous assessments, students who made no attempt to respond to questions were counted as nonparticipants. Any students not approved for non-testing who do not participate in PARCC assessments will count against school, district, and state participation rates. We will count as nonparticipants (rather than participants with a

score of zero) any students who make no effort to take PARCC assessments, including those who attend a testing session.

Will schools lose Title I funds if their participation rates fall below 95 percent?

Schools and school districts will not lose federal funds because of missing their participation-rate targets or goals. As federal law sets forth, schools without a participation rate of 95 percent or better have failed to meet their annual assessment targets. This year, we will report schools that fail to reach a 95-percent participation rate, but we will not use the 2015 results or participation rates to move any schools into the classifications of Warning, Focus, or Priority (our three lowest classifications). In future years, schools that fail to attain that participation rate may be classified as “warning schools” or lower.

As always, we are available to help if problems or questions arise, and the PARCC call center will be open throughout the testing window.

From RIDE

Assessments: PARCC

4. *Reminder: RIDE to take snapshot of student registrations tomorrow (March 14) – Action Item*

Tomorrow (March 14), we will take a snapshot of your student registrations that will be used for accountability; this date was moved back from the March 6 so as to reduce the number of data

reviews for the LEAs. This snapshot will be used to validate and clean the data for accountability reporting. It is critical that you ensure that your student registration data is as accurate as possible by tomorrow, especially the resolution of duplicates.

5. PARCC seeks applicants to help set performance levels for assessments; application deadline, Thursday

PARCC is accepting applications for participants in the spring-summer 2015 performance level-setting process. Participation in the performance-level setting will allow participants to have a large role in defining how student performance on PARCC assessments translates to college and career readiness.

PARCC will report the results of its assessments according to five performance levels, 1 through 5. Performance-level setting is the process for determining the threshold scores students must earn on the assessments in order to achieve each performance level.

PARCC performance-level setting will consist of a series of events (locations to be determined): a dry run meeting in May and grade-span meetings in July and August. The Field Trial will take place May 4 through 7, and participants must be available for all four days. High-school performance-level setting will take place during the last week in July. Middle-school and elementary-school performance-level setting will take place during the third and fourth weeks of August, respectively. The purpose of the dry run is to serve as a dress rehearsal for the summer grade-span performance level-setting meetings.

The PARCC performance level-setting meetings are a unique opportunity for educators to engage professionally with their peers from across the PARCC states. Participants will leave the

meetings with a better understanding of how assessment threshold scores are determined and of the expectations for student performance on the PARCC assessments.

During the summer meetings, K-12 and postsecondary content experts will meet in committees to make judgments about where to establish the performance-level threshold scores for each of the 21 PARCC assessments. All hotel and travel costs, including meals and ground transportation, will be covered, and participants who are not being paid by their employers at the time of the meeting will receive a stipend of \$150 per day.

If you are interested in participating in the PARCC performance level-setting meetings, you may complete the application linked here:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PARCC_PLS_320.

Applicants are asked to describe their experience in education, including their familiarity with PARCC and the Common Core State Standards, and to identify their grade-span and content-area assignment preferences. Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. on **Thursday** (March 19). Applicants selected to participate will be notified early next month.

Data Collection:

6. RIDE opens career-technical data collection for high schools, centers, programs; informational webinars scheduled

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) data collection is required for any district that operated approved programs during

the current school year. The list of approved programs that are required to submit data can be found on the RIDE website [here](#). If a program is undergoing review for the first time this school year, it will be required to submit this data collection for the coming school year (2015-16). To determine what career and technical education courses and programs must be reported by your school, if any, please refer to the RIDE-approved [program list](#).

The data in the collection include CTE-program and student-level information that will be used for reporting requirements and for further development of outcome metrics. Some data elements that directly relate to student outcomes in the program will need the input of school leadership, the CTE or program director, or instructor in the program. The data elements required for this collection are outlined in the published data-specification document found [here](#). The collection is now open, and the data are due by the end of this school year.

Webinars to answer program-related questions will be held on Wednesday, April 1, and Tuesday, April 7, from 3 to 4 p.m. To register for April 1 [click here](#); to register for April 7, [click here](#).

For program-related questions regarding the CTE data collection, please contact Paula Barney, at paula.barney@ride.ri.gov or 222-8399. Data managers with any questions please about this collection should enter a helpdesk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

7. RIDE issues reminders regarding data collection, data quality

Reminder: Special education-related service personnel data are now collected in the PDC

In a continued effort to create efficiencies, RIDE has added the special education-related service personnel data collection to the Personnel Data Collection (PDC) system. For this year, the PDC closes on June 30. This deadline will allow the collection of these data to be removed from the annual Consolidated Resource Plan application, thereby creating one collection for LEAs. We have continued to consolidate collections whenever possible. Moving this collection into the PDC will create one integrated system for all personnel data and will allow us to pull the necessary IDEA federal personnel reports from one source, the PDC. If you have questions about this change, please contact David Sienko, at David.Sienko@ride.ri.gov. If you have any questions about special education data collection, please enter a helpdesk ticket, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

*Reminder: Funding Formula collection data due **Monday** (March 16) – Action Item*

Funding Formula data will be closed on **Monday** (March 16), at 10 a.m. Please make sure your LEA calendar is up to date, including adjustments for snow days. The following fields in the Enrollment Census will be used for the funding formula: enroll_type, enroll_date, exit_date, lunch, and distCode_res. All duplicates need to be addressed.

Please review the Outside Enrollment file download (the second-to-last report in the Report Types dropdown) to ensure that your outplaced students are showing up correctly. For information on this report, please review the [Enrollment Census FAQ document](#). If you see records in your file that you believe are

incorrect, or if there are missing records, please make sure you contact the other LEAs to resolve discrepancies.

Once the review of the data is complete, the following reports will need to be reviewed, signed, and submitted to RIDE: Snapshot, Submission, and State Calculated ADM. Due to the nature of these data, the reports will need to be pulled between Monday at 10 a.m. and **Tuesday** (March 17) at noon. The [Calculating ADM document](#) explains how the Average Daily Membership is calculated for the reports.

If you have any questions about Funding Formula data, please enter a helpdesk ticket, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

*Reminder: Textbook-collection data due **March 27** – Action Item*

Each year, RIDE collects and distributes a listing of textbooks used in all public schools. The purpose of this list is to meet the requirements of General Laws 16-23-2 and 16-23-3, which provide for the loan of textbooks in the areas of mathematics, science, foreign language, English-language arts, and history/social studies in grades K-12 to nonpublic schools in Rhode Island.

LEAs are required to submit a complete listing of all textbooks planned for use during the current academic year to RIDE using eRIDE (www.eride.ri.gov). The Textbook List Upload module within eRIDE is an electronic process through which districts must manage their textbook lists by adding and deleting titles and pertinent information. Instructions for the use of the eRIDE system, including detailed information about uploading textbook titles and ISBN numbers are attached.

All LEAs must update the complete list of textbooks currently in use by **March 27**. Once we have received updates from all LEAs, the information will be aggregated and posted to the RIDE website.

Any inquiries regarding the program should be addressed to Lauren McCarthy, at 222-8463 or lauren.mccarthy@ride.ri.gov. If there are technical issues regarding the use of eRIDE, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

From other organizations

8. Conference scheduled for April 11 on setting high expectations for all students

Please see this notice from the Central Falls School District and the Rhode Island Mayoral Academies:

The Central Falls School District, in partnership with the Rhode Island Mayoral Academies and Blackstone Valley Prep, is hosting the ComebackCity High Expectations project (CHEP) with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The [High Expectations Conference: College & Career for All](#) will take place on Saturday, **April 11**, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in Cumberland. The sessions are designed with teachers, leaders, and families in mind, and participants will engage in collective activities to refine the shared vision and advance teacher practice centered on higher student expectations. You can read the [session descriptions here](#).

Registration is free and open to all. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Who: teachers, leaders, and families (childcare and Spanish translation provided)

What: High Expectations Conference: College & Career for All

Where: 52 Broad St., Cumberland

When: April 11

Keynote Speaker: Kate Gerson, Senior Fellow for Educator Engagement and The Common Core, with the University of the State of New York Regents Research Fund

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>